



Flooding and Destruction in North Carolina

Situation Report #2

October 3, 2024

Project HOPE is responding in North Carolina to the catastrophic flooding caused by Hurricane Helene, which has cut off entire communities, killed more than 200 people across six states, and created health care shortages across western North Carolina.

Situation Overview

Almost one week after Hurricane Helene caused significant flooding across southern Appalachia, the region remains under search and rescue conditions. Roadways have been damaged by flooding and landslides, and 27 counties in western North Carolina remain in a state of emergency.

More than 1,200 people are living at 23 state and local shelters and countless families are residing with friends, family, and neighbors after evacuating.

Project HOPE's team on the ground reports that health workers and their families in the Asheville area are living at health facilities, without access to water for cleaning and personal hygiene, so they can continue to care for patients.

Key Updates

- Severe flooding in North Carolina following Hurricane Helene has caused widespread power outages and disrupted access to potable water, creating difficult conditions for health workers.
- More than 200 people across six states have been killed and many communities remain cut off in the Appalachian Mountains.
- Lack of access to clean drinking water and health care increases the risk of infectious diseases, particularly in crowded settings like shelters.
- Project HOPE's emergency response team is on the ground in North Carolina distributing hygiene kits and sanitation supplies to clinics, shelters, and health facilities.
- Our team continues to anticipate growing health, water, sanitation, and mental health needs in the communities most impacted by the ongoing crisis.

Our team also reports that hospitals in impacted areas are discharging patients who have less immediate needs. Local health workers across the region are at risk of burnout because of the dual surge in community needs and the impact of the storm on their own lives. Our team has noticed a huge demand for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services for both health workers and community members who are still grappling with the storm’s devastating impacts.



Damage from Hurricane Helene in Asheville, North Carolina. Project HOPE has deployed a team to the area to assess damage and determine the greatest needs being requested by clinics and shelters. Photo by Project HOPE staff, 2024.

More than 283,000 people remain without power in North Carolina following the historic flooding. Impacted counties remain under boil water advisories, with some water systems either severely damaged or completely non-functional. **Health facilities, including long-term care facilities, report immense needs for not just drinking water, but for water they can use to ensure sanitary conditions for their patients.**

In addition to WASH supplies, Project HOPE continues to receive requests for medicines and medical supplies, including over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and insulin and cold chain support for people with diabetes. The Project HOPE team has also received reports from health workers that prenatal care in the most heavily impacted areas has been severely disrupted, with some pregnant patients forced to evacuate to seek care.

Project HOPE is Responding

Project HOPE’s response team in western North Carolina has begun distributions of hygiene supplies, water, and OTC medicines, in coordination with local shelters and clinics. Through rapid assessments, the team has identified additional urgent needs and is working to establish a consistent supply chain for impacted communities.

Project HOPE is preparing to deploy volunteers in coordination with health clinics to relieve frontline health workers in order to give them space to assess their personal needs and regroup for long-term recovery efforts. As the impacts of this crisis continue to unfold, we anticipate health, water, sanitation, and mental health needs will continue to grow and become more urgent, especially as access is restored to communities who remain cut off from health and support services.

"You never think it will happen to you and then it does and you don't know where to even begin. I don't want to be a burden to my family and ask for help. I hope this brings our community together because we are changed forever after this."

— Laurie, a staff member at Bear Mountain Health and Rehabilitation, where Project HOPE has delivered supplies

Project HOPE is committed to supporting local responses and partnering with local organizations. Our team continues to coordinate with the National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics (NAFCC), as well as local and state chapters. Project HOPE has a history of active partnership with the NAFCC to empower health workers with the tools they need to provide care across the United States. **As frontline responders to underserved and under-resourced communities, charitable clinics are critical to improving health equity, especially during emergencies.**



Project HOPE's Laura Hoganson and Wes Comfort gather supplies in Spartanburg, South Carolina to distribute to clinics and shelters in western North Carolina following Hurricane Helene. Photo by Project HOPE staff, 2024.

In the United States, Project HOPE recently responded to Hurricane Ida in 2021, Hurricane Ian in 2022, and Hurricane Idalia in 2023 by providing surge staffing to health facilities, delivering urgently needed supplies to affected communities, and equipping health facilities with medicines and supplies.

“People have gone days without power or potable drinking water. Flooding has caused sewage overflow which contaminates the surrounding area and creates a breeding ground for water-borne illnesses.”

*— Arlan Fuller, Project HOPE
Director of Emergency
Preparedness and Response*